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ABSTRACT

To determine how children develop schema for text that include increasing sensitivity to text types, text categories, orthographic conventions in words, conventional story beginnings and endings, and text cohesive ties, a study examined the writing of four kindergarten children. The kindergarten had adopted a process-conference approach to writing that included a 30-minute daily writing period, emphasis on personal control with regard to topic choice, spelling and punctuation, weekly discussions or conferences about writing with the classroom teacher, and "publication" of good stories. A review was made of all the writing completed by the children in their kindergarten year. In addition, one tape of a group writing session was made for each of the final six months of the year. Analyses indicated the following characteristics of the study children's writing: (1) drawing precedes and aids writing; (2) early stories depend on drawing for meaning; (3) specific story formats are used repeatedly and help to develop fluency; (4) use of past tense develops as more story categories are included; (5) as writing expertise increases, drawing ceases to be as important; (6) use of revision develops with a sense of the author's role; (7) earlier copying of labels and stories gives way to inclusion of trade book characters in stories and recounting of previously read stories in one's own words; and (8) story size may depend on the number of pages available to make a book or on what the group sees as an acceptable length. (HOD)

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Reading-Writing Relationships: A discussion of text characteristics for primary teachers

Summary: Children's conversations while writing and reading reveal their developing understanding of text characteristics. This paper describes the year's progress of four kindergarteners and explores implications for teaching.

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CS 007272

Reading-Writing Relationships: A discussion of text characteristics for primary teachers

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Children's conversations while writing and reading reveal their developing understanding of text characteristics. This paper describes the year's progress of four kindergarteners and explores implications for teaching.

Background to the Study

Weaver and Resnick (1979) in an introduction to their three volume tome on the theory and practice of early reading state:

> "emerging theories of how people understand language and how language functions in social communication are being used to refine views of what a new meaning-oriented approach to early reading instruction might become (p.7).

As with reading, perhaps the most important fact which writing researchers state about young writers is, that from the very beginning, young children intend to represent meaning in what they write. (Clay, 1975).

Indicators of growth in reading

Using text structure

We call a text a text because of the way in which it is organised, or structured. Researchers have sought to describe text structure in various ways using story grammars, (Rumelhart, 1975; Stein and Glenn, 1978) expository prose predicate structures (Mayer, 1975) and propositional analyses (Kintsch, 1974).

The ability to distinguish one type of text structure from another is learned early. When asked to tell how certain books (narrative and expository texts) differ, second graders replied:

> "They're story books and they're making books" (KARA)
> "Stories and encyclopedias with things about things" (NATALIE)
> 'Stories and books that give you information" (AMY)
> "books about a person and making books" (MICHAEL)

Several important studies have shown that for children as young as four years, the narrative structure is able to be used to comprehend new information. Poulsen, Kintsch, Kintsch and Premack (1979) found that pre-school children have developed an understanding which, even though they couldn't read, they could use to order a series of 15-18 pictures to make a story. Studies by Korman (1944), Brown (1975), Stein and Glenn (1978) and Whaley (1981) note the importance of story structure for comprehension and recall of text, and also that a child's concept of story develops over time.

Building of a personal bibliography of well-loved books.

Beaver (1982) noted the behaviour of pre-school children who want to hear a favourite story over and over again. She attributed this to a need to become familiar with whole stories, at a time when children (below the age of 7) tend to focus on specific parts of stories in telling or retelling. Holdaway's (1979) shared-book experience method takes this phenomena and applies it to classroom practice.

All four children in this study mention the importance of particular trade books: for reading, for copying and for generating new stories.

Development of fluency

This can occur as children become familiar with a favourite story and as school provides opportunities for fluency to develop, with pre-recorded Readalong tapes and the provision of time for books for wide reading and thoughtful writing. Kelley, in this study, developed proficiency in writing through instituting her own practice sessions.

Using reading for writing and writing for reading

One of the aspects of early writing which I noted in the study was the use made of copying favourite stories, and of placing favourite story characters into personal reports. The "Mr Men" characters were often given pride of place.

Indicators of growth in writing

Writers who take risks with spelling

Several studies explore the relationship between reading and writing at the primary level. De Ford's (1981) study of the impact of different types of beginning reading instruction on developing reading and writing strategies, emphasized the importance of knowing about text at levels which are more inclusive than just letter, word or sentence, right from the beginning.

An Australian study, (Dormer, 1981), which looked at the relationships between the error behaviour in reading and spelling of second graders, concluded that children who took the risk of predicting plausible responses in oral reading, were also more willing to take risks with spelling. They attempted longer and more interesting stories, and their spellings contained more orthographic markers. On the other hand, poorer readers, who relied heavily on graphophonic cues to the detriment of reading meaningful sentences, tended to be writers who would not attempt words which they knew they could not spell.

Writers who use story conventions and cohesive devices

Several other studies have evaluated infants school children's acquisition of aspects of text, through an analysis of children's writings and retellings.

Applebee (1978) compared the writings and dictated stories of children from two to five years of age with the retellings of children aged six, nine, thirteen and seventeen. He found a developmental progression in the use of certain story conventions and narrative structures. First to appear was the use of past tense, followed by formal beginnings such as "Once upon a time....." and then formal endings. More of these were used by nine year olds than by six year olds. Nine year olds remembered more incidents and were more faithful to the time sequence of events. A recent study by King and Rentel (1981) evaluated children's use of cohesion or text interconnections

such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion, in writing.

King and Rentel collected story retellings, dictated stories and story writings of Kindergarten/First Grade children and First/Second grade children at four-monthly intervals over a sixteen month period. Their findings showed an increasingly specific use of some of the cohesive devices, with negligible use of others. Reference within a text is kown as endophoric. It can be backward reference (anaphoric: referring back to a previous mention in the text); or it can be forward reference (cataphoric: referring forward to a mention further on in the text). Endophoric reference seeks to make meaning clear within the text itself. Exophoric reference is reference to some subject outside of the text. Exophoric reference was found to decrease dramatically over the sixteen months, as children's stories became more intact and relied less on contextual, environmental reference. In this study, Sharon's stories showed a distinct change from those which depended on a picture reference, to those which made sense even when the picture was taken away. In addition, Conjunction, the way in which what is to come is semantically linked to what has gone before, increased.

Lexical Cohesion, the use of related vocabulary items within the text, also increased during the time of the study.

Ellipsis (omission of elements, particularly from dialogue which requires the reader to recall previous text), and Substitution (use of a word to stand for a word phrase or clause) - were scarcely used in the texts of these First and Second grade children.

King and Rentel noted the developmental nature of the use of these cohesive devices in children's writing and the lack of significance which direct teaching played in the activity. Purposeful exposure to oral and written texts, and purposeful tasks for using the information gained, seemed to be the educational implication.

Aspects of text which assume importance for writers

Graves (1982) spoke of aspects of writing which assume importance for writers at different stages. For young writers in school, spelling, aesthetics and handwriting may be important. Because of teacher response to writing, conventions may assume importance. When these issues become automatic, more attention may be given to topic information and adding or taking away text. However, Graves went on to say, all five categories are present in the life of any writer and what the teacher emphasizes in class, becomes the important issue as far as writing is concerned for the child. It was interesting to note the emphases which the children in this study placed on particular aspects of writing at different times during the year.

Making Connections

It is important to keep relating what we know about text characteristic from both reading and writing, to classroom endeavour. Research reviewed in this paper has shown that children as young as four years can use text structure to order information, and that certain categories of text appear more frequently in children's recall of text (viz. setting statements introducing the protagonist, initiating events and consequence statements.) Unconsciously, the child's concept of text is developing alongside notions of phonology, syntax and semantics.

The developing reader is also a developing writer. Those who are mastering the reading process are also writing stories, attempting to spell long and interesting words, and ensuring that text sentences relate to one another and are independent of outside, non-text contexts.

All of these insights into what children know about text and what they can use to comprehend better and to be better writers, can be summarized by what the text research calls schema theory. Either consciously or unconsciously we develop schemas or ways of doing things or knowing things,

by plugging in to demonstrations (Smith, 1981) of the action or the object in the environment. Continued experiences of the action or the object develops automaticity.

How, then, do children develop schemas for text which include increasing sensitivity to text types, text categories, orthographic conventions in words, conventional story beginnings and endings, and text cohesive devices? This study followed four Kindergarten children who were given daily opportunities to write, to seek answers to these questions.

Methodological Considerations

This study analyzed the writing of four kindergarteners in a regular classroom in a Sydney school. Criterion for their selection was straightforward. The Sydney infants' school was one of three regional schools where the process-conference approach to writing (Graves, 1980) had been adopted as school policy. Practical outcomes of this policy included a 30 min daily writing period, emphasis on personal control with regard to topic choice, spelling and punctuation, weekly discussions or conferences about writing with the classroom teacher and "publication" of good stories. These four children sat around the same table for writing, and represented children across the achievement range. This fact was evident in their writing.

A review was made of all of the writings completed by the children in their kindergarten year. These writings had been dated and filed by the classroom teacher. In addition, one tape of a group writing session was made for each of the final six months of the year.

Research Questions

The tapes and writings of four kindergarteners led the researcher to formulate post hoc questions which summarised those aspects of the activities which seemed most prevalent. These questions guided the analysis of the written products and the tape transcripts:

1. What does each child write and when do changes occur?

2. What does each child say or do which is indicative of reflective thinking?

3. What individual strategies are initiated by the children?

The researcher is fully aware that these data could have been analyzed in any number of different ways. However, these questions seemed to be important: what happens? what does each child think about the task at hand? what strategies indicate a personalization of the task?

Research Orientation

The method used to study how children develop schemas for text differed considerably from researcher-controlled studies where the researcher asks all the questions and seeks to establish causal relationships through looking at a small slice of reality. In this study, the researcher was concerned with describing phenomena as they occur in natural undisturbed settings, employing what Barker (1968) calls "docile" data gathering procedures:

> "The psychologist is a docile receiver, coder and transducer of information about the input, interior conditions, and output of psychological units. The data as they emerge from the system answer the question, 'what goes on here' (p.140)."

As Cambourne (1983) states, such naturalistic studies resemble the "grounded theory" research studies described in the literature of sociology by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Instead of being concerned with the verification or falsification of already existing theory its focus is on the generating of theory which is "anchored" to (i.e. "grounded" in) and emerges from, the data which are collected.

Data Gathering Procedures

To answer Question 1 (What does each child write and when do changes occur?) all of the writing products for the children were collected and then analyzed. The researcher looked for the introduction of new aspects

of language, as well as the continued use of specific types of language throughout the writing.

The information was tabulated by making a summary of each month's written products. This table is printed below:

Insert Table 1

Metacognitive strategies, states Marland and Edwards (1982) "involve the students reflecting on their own thinking".

To answer the second question (What does each child say or do which is indicative of reflective thinking?) a series of tapes was made during the second six months of 1982 in order to capture student talk during writing. The researcher acted as participant observer during this task: responding to children's writing, helping them when help was requested, and often asking them to reflect on their motives for particular actions. As individual actions of the four writers became more comprehensible to the researcher, more pertinent questions could be asked of each child. As more time was spent with the children, the researcher's presence became less disruptive of general classroom procedures. Transcripts were made of each tape and a monthly table was made to summarise the specific activities and pertinent reflective thinking of each child. This information is found in Table 2.

Insert Table 2

TABLE 1

What does each child write and when do changes occur?

Sharon	Justin	Rebecca	Kelley
Writes whole words, numbers, alphabet letters 2/3 Writes symbols repetitively in long rows 17/3	Writes his own name 2/3 Alphabet letter stands for whole word 29/3 Copying labels from chalkboard 30/3	Writes own name Writes individual words 19/3 30/3	Upper & lower case letters, numbers 1-10 Attributed words bear little relationship to letters used [xyz = boat] 2/3 Copying from poster in classroom 19/3 Alphabet letters used for whole words 30/3
Writes symbols repetitively 2/4 Copies "Mr Men" names "This is ——" format 14/4 [Hs is a Ps I ✱ K H Ps KN u s H PLs o] 15/4	Writes labels with some recognizable words 17/4 "I can——" format 20/4 Unrecognizable symbols for unknown words.	Evidence of full stops between words 1/4 Copying labels from chalkboard and "Mr Men" names 20/4	More possible letters used in words [BPT BUKB AT WE TO B TO] [We played basketball and went to the beach today] 14/4
Starts underlining each word (16/4) after confusing words in lines 15/4 All descriptions relate to previously drawn pictures	"I can ——" format 3/5 [I c jop] Approaching conventional spelling		"Today we go to —— and we go to —— and we...etc" format 27/5 This format is used for pages and pages continually
Change from exophoric reference "This is a..." to endophoric reference [It is a rany day in the gudon and I am getin wet .....] 25/6	"I went ——" format continues until December	"When we went ——" format - continues until July Evidence of revision 21/6	through May and June. Evidence of revision.
Use of past tense ["It was suny day for to go to hav a swim..."] 13/7 Use of title page - "The story of ——" format "When I...." format. 15/7	[I we to zo] I went to school	First story. [I. pt. my Face. and. I. sged. Amdrew. and sged. Peter too n a sged we Bak and Thats the end of the story] 26-29/7 "I was in ——" format.	Repetitive format used again but changed to the past tense, e.g. On —— we wet to —— and then we etc. 1/7, 5/7 Title page "The story is about ——" format 29/7 Many stories end with a statement about the subject [I lic The soo it is nus] 30/7

TABLE 1

One day...format 30/7 Today) 19/8 Toniyt)...format 20/8	[I we To Th Kk ul wb 20/8 Evidence of revision			[I lic The Fum iT is nis]16/8 [I lic Sharon She is nis I lic evrewun] 13/8
The story of..... 24-28/9	[I we to the Tran moin I we to nivie nad ii licTi end it had a Fune Put end the f] 27/9 Evidence of revision	"I went to ——" format [I wt To putt putt GFo] 13/9		Report on holidays [In the holidays I wet..]16/9
Today it is rayninge ... format 5/10 Won day .. format 18/10 Final evidence of story underlining 6/10	[I we to there sists wen hide + seek I played with Jason] 25/10 Evidence of revision	Use of title page 13/10 The Banana Tree by Rebecca Put.golf by Rebecca 22/10		Title page in The gudn my Kelley 6/10 Use of time markers Wus once gest then just then
Sense of audience Revision - My Dad story	[I wet o BichenT I lok i the luk k hp I jP on iT eiT ad.] 8/11	[I.went.To.Joshuas.Berthday. I.Like.it. Final evidence of full stops between words 8/11		Recounting experiences The Easter Show 8/11 Writing out the words of a song 10/11
[I like Christmas It is fun... A long story = a good story	[I we To the zoo end I so the enaki iT woz kom om the Buz I lokt funey it i woz e u Bnu t the end]	[Santa is Coming To Might To My House. We Hang The Stockings Up in a Row.] 8/12		Recounting a known story (Hansel & Gretel) 18/11-1/12 A long story = a good story K's reputation grows with the length of her story.

TABLE 2

Q2 What does each child say or do which is indicative of reflective thinking?

	Sharon	Justin	Rebecca	Kelley
July	.S contrasts first and published versions of a piece of writing and concentrates on spelling variation .S demonstrates concepts of what's in a story .S states drawing must precede writing and that decisions about story length are made before drawing and writing proceed .Copying from storybooks at home is common .S stated that story length is related to picture detail.	.J states words can be spelled in alternate ways .J admits paucity of written products	.R spends half the time figuring out how to write MR by repeatedly sounding it .She asks Kelley how to spell words. Justin, Sharon and Kelley offer responses.	.K discusses home events .K asks Sharon for help in spelling words .K helps Justin and Rebecca with spelling .K puts homophones (a,are) in a sentence to distinguish which spelling is needed
August	.S spells words for everyone else in the group .S knows where to find conventional spellings of words	.J spends most time talking and drawing .J has good intentions but never quite succeeds in starting to write	.R spends a lot of time working out how to spell "together" and "the". She asks a number of people, separately, how to spell these words, as well as sounding each part of each word out repeatedly.	.K copies S's format for writing stories "Today I was in the garden..." and repeats words to work out spelling. .K states her viewpoint as to why I'm working with them. "She has to use it"(children's writing)Aug 23
Sept.	.S gets story topics from Justin and composes a story with Kelley .S initiates group conversation which seems to develop from story topics but is not necessarily related to the act of writing. .S's source for stories. "In my mind". .Sometimes drawing before writing intrudes "I know what I'm writing about but I can't think of um what I can draw".	.J supplies a topic for writing which everyone else takes and uses. Then he has to change his topic to maintain autonomy. .Spelling is done by sounding out .J knows which letters he can write .J has more confidence and views publishing as an important end product of writing.	.R spends a lot of time working out the letters in garden [Gd N] Sept 20 and thing Sept 27 .R adds the word 'first' to her story (I might write first and water my garden) Evidence of revision .R is now more willing to provide a possible spelling herself rather than seeking out spellings from other people. .R starts writing early. She shows Justin "r" There's a "r". I've got "r".	.K & S compose a 'Lollyland' story together as they draw pictures. .K helps R with spelling. .K explains the relationship between Justin and the trade name Just-Jeans. "His name's Just Jeans because he's Justin and he always wears jeans". Sept 27

TABLE 2

October	.S & K collaborate to produce stories. .S discusses her habit of underlining words (so she can read the words in a straight line).	.J draws detailed pictures and discusses them. .J uses name labels of children on each desk to help in spelling words .J depends on commonplace sayings .J spells a word for Rebecca	.R has gained much confidence. She continues to assist Justin. "There you go, Justin. That's how you write it". .R writes longer stories (20 words). Much time is still spent writing down the symbols which match the sounds which she "hears". .R uses the alphabet song to figure out which symbol she needs to represent a sound in a word.	.K & S collaborate to produce stories .K writes a "made-up" story about burglars.
November				
December	.S reiterates purpose of underlining.	.Justin has changed focus. He is right into writing, before completing a picture. However, completing a picture is still part of the task. Justin prefers to do it <u>after</u> writing.	.R knows where to find examples of conventional spelling around the room. .R leaves a space instead of writing dots. .R spends much time in analyzing which sounds are in words by repeating the actual words.	.K helps R with spelling. She distinguishes g from j in spelling magic ...."g(j) like g(hard g)". .K reads an eight page Hansel and Gretel story she's written and relates it previous home story reading by "me nana and me mum" Dec 9

Probably the most interesting of the questions asked was concerned with the individual strategies which each child developed. Marland et al (1982) in a study planned to investigate how the effects of teaching on learning are mediated through students' mental processes, note the importance of neighbour interactions.

> "Students interacted with neighbours for social, academic and psychological reasons. For example, they sought relief from passivity in the lesson, assisted each other in problem solving tasks, alerted each other to the teacher's approach and debated problems." (p.397)

Neighbour interactions were very important for these four kindergarten writers. Right from the start, Sharon assumed a leadership role in the group. When anyone needed to know how to spell a word, Sharon supplied the spelling.

e.g. Excerpt August 23, 1982.

S: FOUR That's how you spell four.
Do you mean the number four?

M: No

S: Oh! that's not the ... that's the number four. I'll show ya for.

However, her conventional spellings are not always accepted:

e.g. Excerpt August, 1982.

S: Farm ... do you want to spell farm?

J: I know how to spell farm.

S: There's no farm over there (looking at picture/word cards on the far wall)

K: Yes there is, at the bottom.

S: Oh yeh.

J: I don't copy off that ... because there's two ways of spelling farm.

When Rebecca asked (August, 1982)

R: How do ya write Mr? excerpt p.2, Sharon again offered advice, but it wasn't accepted: the whole group became involved in the problem.

S: Oh! What did you spell there? You don't put another m there.

K: Misda Miss

S: Mr starts with M. You don a M there. You don't do it in the middle of ...

R: I'm only writing miss da miss da.

K: You shouldn't have m in the middle. You put the d round that way.

S: That's b ... d's like this ... that's not d (pointing to Rebecca's b). That's d and that's b.

(Sharon points to her own two examples, written on her picture).

R: Mi ... mi

S: Yes that's better.

K: You've now got a b.

S: That's a d, that's a b.

K: No it isn't.

S: Yes.

K: That's ...

J: If you want to know, that one's wrong (pointing to Sharon's writing).

Kelley also sought Sharon's help with spelling a word:

Excerpt August, 1982.

K: How do you write about? I know it's a 'a'.

T: That's a good start ...

K: What comes after 'b'?

T: Look at this Sharon. Can you help Kelley write 'about'?

S: That's an upside down b.

T: Sit down and help her for a minute.

S: See b goes like that ... that's b and that's d ... do you want to spell 'about'? A B A ... another A.

K: Which one?

S: You know ... the same a...o...o no I mean w...w...I meant. Yeh I know it's a w. Just do a w over that and a t.

It's interesting to note in the December transcript, when Rebecca is writing her story: (I saw a banana tree. I liked it because I like bananas plain and I like them in rice bubbles), and needs to know how to spell them, Justin's attempts are rejected. Not everyone in the group has the status of knowledge provider, although all assume the role to varying degrees throughout the year.

December 9, 1982, pp.2-3.

R: Them does it start with a "th" first or a "m" first?

T: What's the word?

R: Them.

T: Say it.

R: Them.

T: What word is it like?

Justin: "T" "H" "E" "M"

R: "t"

T: Rebecca what do you think goes next?

R: "h" them them them

T: them

R: them them "m"

---

insert Figure 1 and Figure 2

On September 27, when Justin wrote about trains, Rebecca checked his story.

J: Is that a "w"?

R: Yes

J: I went to ...
(I we to o)

Sharon: ooh thunder

The Band Tree
by Rebecca

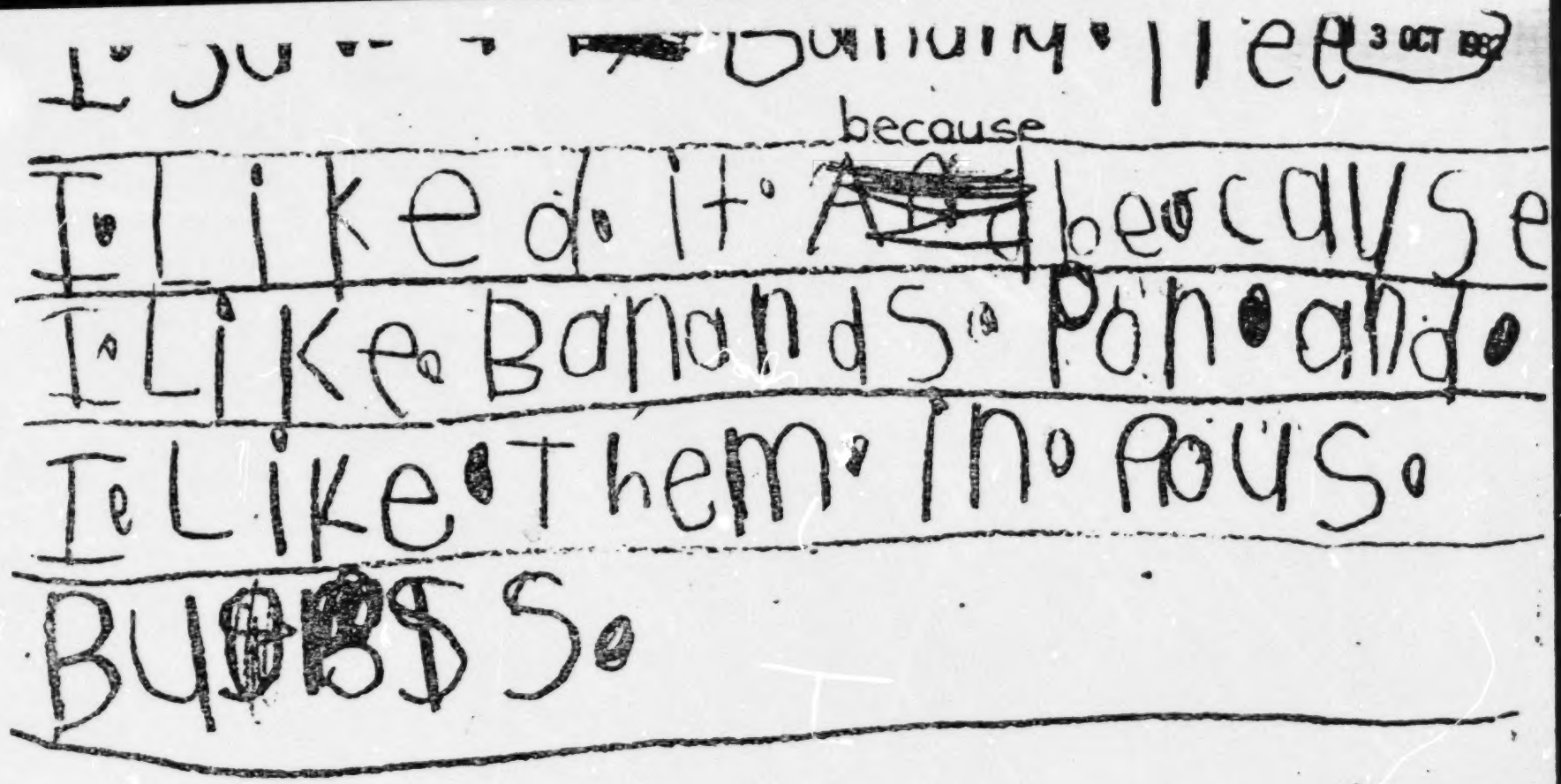

Figure 2

R: *I wet to...that doesn't make sense. I we to... that doesn't make sense...and I saw a funny...funny... how do you do a "sh".*

Kelley and Rebecca helped Justin to spell train.

J: *I dunno how to write "tr". I dunno how to write "tr".*

T: *train train train. Do you know how to write tree?*

J: *tr tr*

T: *(to Kelley and Sharon): Do you two know how to write train so you'll be able to do it OK? Do you know how to write train?*

K: *"tr" "a" "n"*

T: *Good girl Kelley...you listen Justin...say it again Kelley.*

K: *"t" "r"*

J: *"t" "r" "r"?*

K: *"r"*

Rebecca: *There's a "r" there's a "r" (pointing to her name) I've got "r". Justin I've got "r" too...do you want me to do a small "r" for you?*

J: *No I'll do it.*

R: *You go.. and then you just...I'll just do it for you. I'll do it up here.*

J: *Look...she's spoiling...spoiling my story.*

Neighbour interactions also define what's important in a story. In December, the general consensus seemed to be that a long story =a good story:

T: *Is this still the same story, is it?*

S: *Yeah, I've already done six pages.*

Ben: *I've got more writing than you (pages of writing).*

Rebecca: *No ya haven't.*

B: *I've got eleven pages.*

Justin: *I've got more than eleven.*

R: *Haven't.*

J: *Yes I have.*

R: *Kelley's got more writing than him.*

T: (to Ben) Is that the story of Christmas?

B: Yup

R: Kelley's got a longer one.

T: (to Kelley) oh that the best story you've ever written?

K: Yep

T: Why is it the best story you've written? Do you know?

K: I've got eight pages.

Each child used individual strategies as they wrote. This seemed to be because, at any particular time, each child had a specific notion of what writing was.

Sharon

Throughout April, most of Sharon's writing formed a description of an accompanying picture. Many began in the same way.

April 14	HS IS A	(This is a ...)
April 15	TSE IS A	
April 20	his is MI	
April 21	THIS IS MY	
April 22	THIS IS A	
April 29	THIS IS A	
April 30	THIZ U	(These are...)

Sharon also wrote about the same subjects: girls, houses, sunny days. By June (2nd) she started to combine those subjects previously written about singly.

Many stories in July started with a description of the weather.

July 13	It was suny day
July 30	One day it was raynyn

By August she commenced stories with Today or ToNIYT. Other story beginnings were story titles written on title pages.

July 29	The story of me getin my erres pist
Sept 28	The story of Kelley at my house

Sharon also used repetition within a story as filler, e.g.

October 18 Won day Kelley was at my house and it was very duck and Mum and dad wor next to us and M.r Skinny wos next to dad and M.r Skinny said to dad I like you and dad said to M.r Skinny I like you to and Mum sid to M.r Skinny I like you and M.r Skinny I like you to and I said to M.r Skinny I like and Kelley sid to M.r Skinny I like you and M.r Skinny sid to Kelley. I like you to and then Kelley went home. the end

In October, Sharon's "My Dad" story indicated a sophisticated understandi of the author's role, which necessitated considerable revision of the story. Sharon had developed a detailed conversation between herself and her Mum using direct speech. When the doctor telephoned from the hospital to tell of Dad's demise, Sharon speaking as the doctor realizes that the doctor would not address Mum as she would, and must revise thence:

and the doktu said you can come and see your husdend now Mrs Mackay. Sharon we are going to the hospetool and we will see ar dad.

Insert Figure 3

Kelley

Early in the year, Kelley copied from printed work around the room and concentrated on reproducing the particular type font represented.

One really interesting strategy which Kelley used for several months was the repetition of sentence patterns (starting May 27th), e.g.

Insert Figure 4

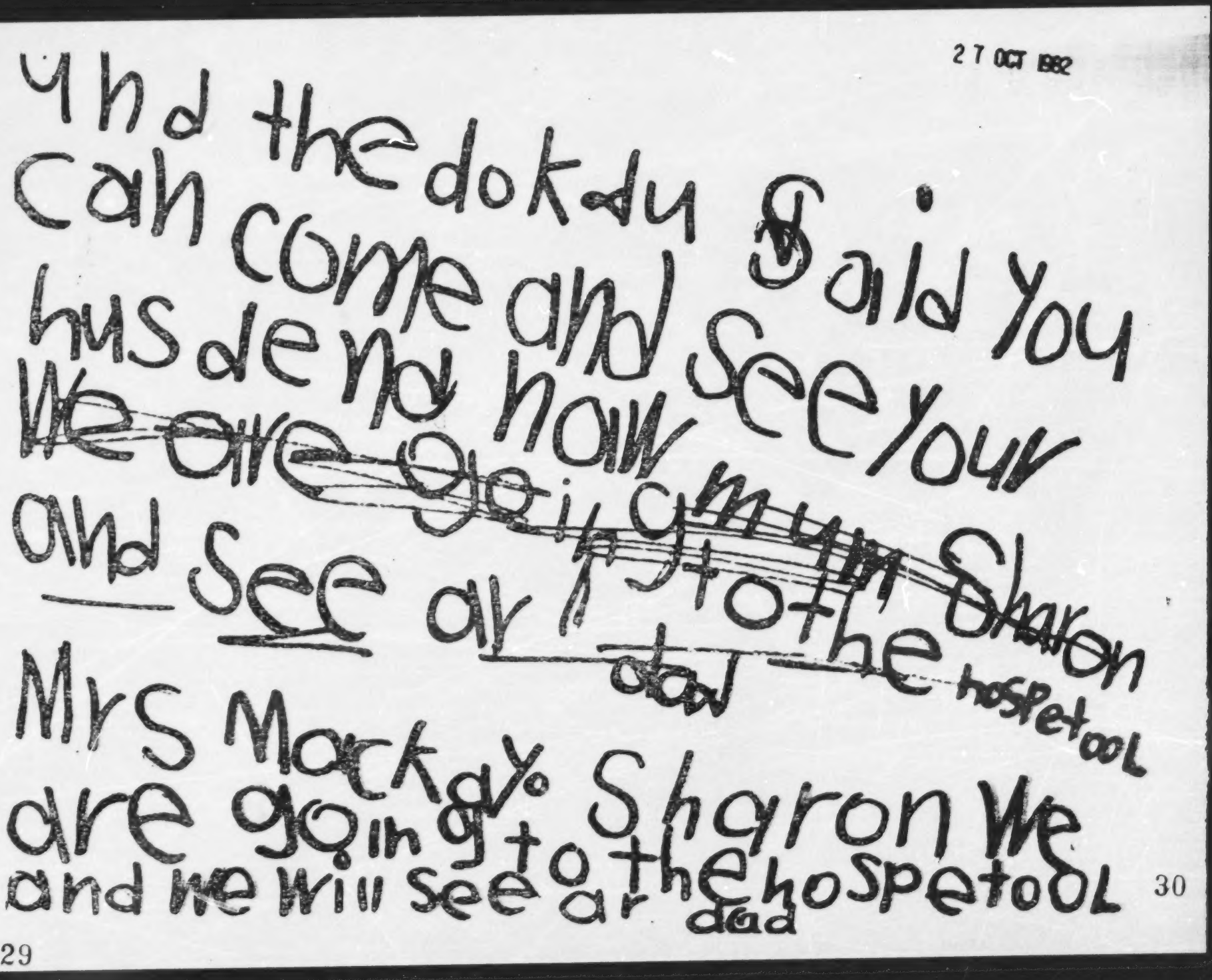
27 OCT 1982
yhd the dokdu said you
Cah come and see your
hus dend how
We are going to the hospetool
and see ar dad
Mrs Mackay Sharon We
are going to the hospetool
and we will see ar dad

Figure 3

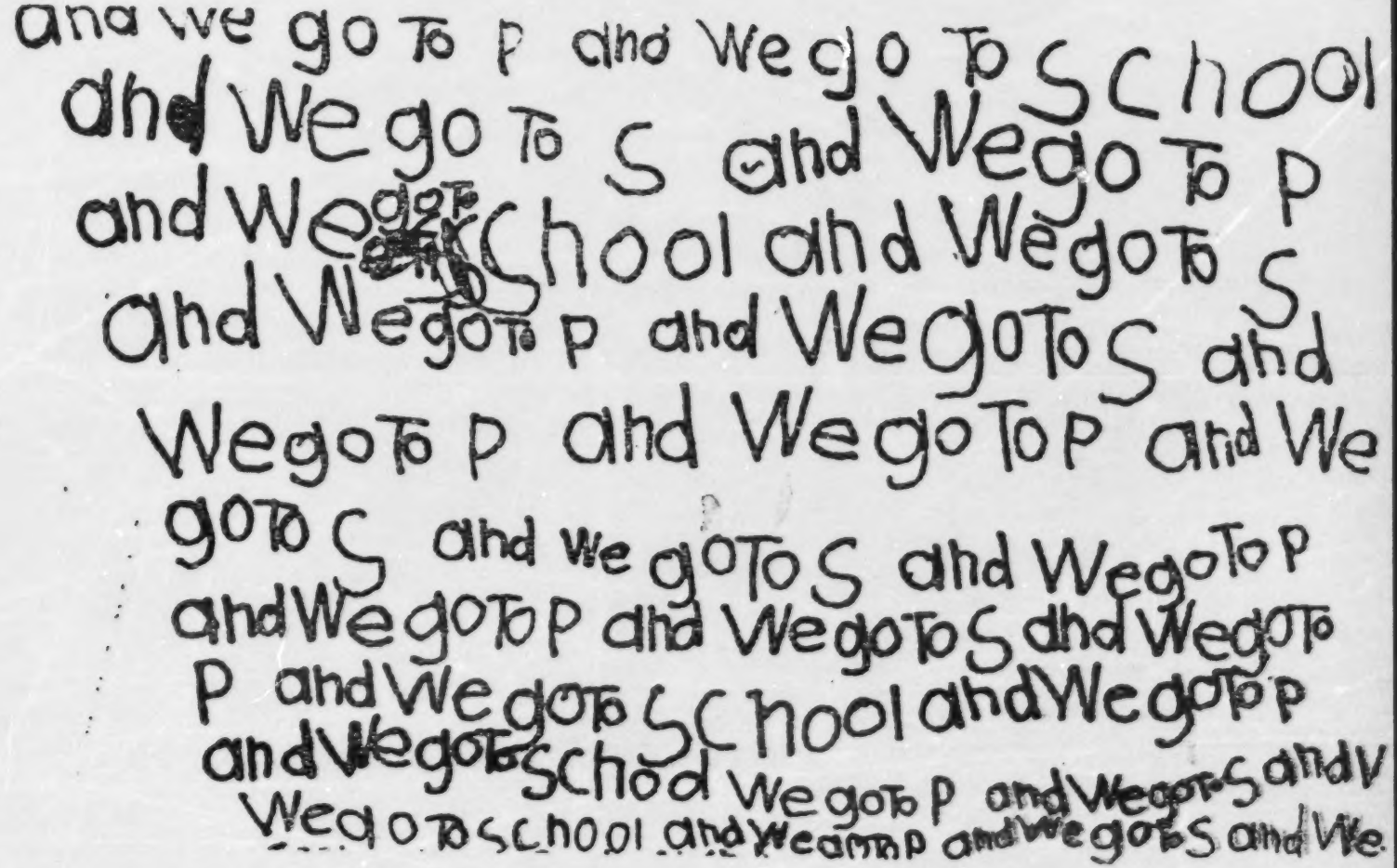
ana we go To p and We go To School
and We go To S and We go To P
and We go To School and We go To S
and We go To p and We go To S and
We go To p and We go To P and We
go To S and we go To S and We go To P
and We go To P and We go To S and We go To
P and We go To School and We go To P
and We go To School and We go To P and We go To S and V
We go To School and We go To P and We go To S and We

Figure 4

In June the pattern was in the present tense; in July it changed to the past tense. In this writing, Kelley also showed evidence of revision. After this intensive practice period, Kelley's writing changed. Late in July she started to use a title, written on a title page.

July 29 The story is about ... by Kelley Hill.

Another repetitive format which Kelley used is an ending statement about the subject, e.g.

July 29 I lic The animals
They are vere nis

July 30 Today we R goin To the zoo
I lic The soo it
is nus

August 13 I lic Sharon She is nis
I lic evrewun

August 16 I lic The Fum
it is nis

Later in the year Kelley's writing recounted previous experiences. She listed the names of children at her table, and wrote out the words of a song.

In December, Kelley wrote a story which had been read to her at home: Hansel and Gretel. By this time, the important criteria for story was length. Kelley's reputation as a writer grew with the length of her story.

Another important aspect of Kelley's development was the way in which she used Sharon's stories as a model for her own. When Sharon started with a setting statement about place and weather, Kelley did too. Reciprocal story writing: The story of Sharon at my house/The story of Kelley at my house was also a result of neighbour interactions.

Rebecca

The most important strategy which Rebecca used across the period of observation was knowing where to find a word. She copied from other children's previously published books, and from titles and labels around the room. For Rebecca, adult convention was paramount: every word had to be spelled correctly.

e.g. September 20th excerpt.

T: *Yes you know what "g" looks like. Like this one that you've already done.*

Rebecca: *But I have to do it that way don't I? I have to do it that way.*

T: *No not necessarily, it doesn't have to be a big one, it can be a little one .....*

Rebecca: *What else? I'm starting to write now. How do you write it? (first)*

Sharon: *It's like ... it's like the starting letter in "father" up there. See "father" up there next to book "F".*

Rebecca: *Is that a ... oh yeah ... I've got it.*

October 18th excerpt.

Rebecca: *Is that it? Does that say it?*

T: *Almost it ... I'll say the word watch me watch me Rebecca. Rice bubbles "ulls"*

R: *"ulls"*

T: *That's right ... in there (as Rebecca points to the place where "l" should be inserted). What letter is it?*

R: *(singing) A B C D E F G H I J K L ... L ... L ... L*

T: *That's right.*

R: *Good. I've finished my story.*

December 9th excerpt.

Rebecca: *Ms F how do you write "saw"?*

T: *How do you think you write it? What's it start with, Rebecca?*

Justin: *"S"*

T: *Justin'll help you ... what does it start with?*

J: *"S"*

T: *and what's next?*

R: *I think I've got that somewhere in my folder.*

This example of Rebecca seeking to spell sky is a good example of the type of child who Clay (1979a) says are captives of our methods (p.250). Such children learn to do exactly what is asked of them. Rebecca has learned that you spell a word the way you can hear it. Yet this information conflicts with the example given by the teacher. If skip is like sky why can't she hear it? This is a cause of some consternation for Rebecca.

Teacher:
Rebecca: *I saw magic land*

Rebecca: *in*

Teacher: *Are you finishing your story? (to Justin)*

Rebecca: *in*

Teacher: *Keep going.*

Rebecca: *in the in the in the in the*

Justin: *How do you write "the"? (Sharon writes th on his page)*

Rebecca: *In the sky*

Teacher: *How do you write "sky"?*

Justin: *the "e" "e"*

Teacher: *Try and do "sky" for me.*

Rebecca: *I saw magic land in the sky.*

Teacher: *What else is in your story?*

Rebecca: *What else?*

Teacher: *Come on, Rebecca.*

Rebecca: *sk..y..y*

Teacher: *What can you hear in sky?*

Rebecca: *S*

Teacher: *Sky sky I*

Rebecca: *sky sky I can only hear "S" "i"*

Teacher: *That'd be "Si"*

Rebecca: *No that"s ... that's it ... that's it or no it's not.*

Teacher: *See down there next to sleep. What's that word?*

Rebecca: *Skip?*

Teacher: *That's right, skip. sky what's the letter in the middle?*

Rebecca: *"i"*

Teacher: *After "s". What's after "s"?*

Rebecca: *"k"*

Teacher: *Yes. "sk"*

Rebecca: *But I've got ... I can only hear "i".*

Teacher: *Sky. Well if you can only hear it you can leave it then.*

Rebecca: *Is that a letter sky?*

Teacher: *Actually it's "y". Do you think that looks right?*

Rebecca: *Sky*

Teacher: *Does that look right?*

Rebecca: *Sky "i" sounds like an "i".*

Teacher: *But sometimes an "i" sounds, a "y" sounds like an "i".*

Rebecca also plays it safe in other ways. She separates each word with a full stop and starts most words with an upper case letter. This is first seen April 1 and continues until November 11.

excerpt October 18th.

T: *What are these little marks here? (pointing to large filled in dots between each word)*

Rebecca: *That's the end of that um that's the end of a word.*

excerpt December 9th.

T: *I notice you've stopped putting dots between your words. Why?*

Rebecca: *(shrugs)*

T: *Why don't you write dots there any more?*

R: *I dunno.*

T: *Why did you write dots there before?*

R: *Because*

T: *You told me you wrote dots there because there was a new word. Why don't you write dots there now?*

R: *I don't feel like it.*

T: *What do you do instead?*

R: *Um leave a space.*

T: *Why?*

R: *I dunno.*

Justin

Justin spent most of the writing time for the year talking about all sorts of things, minimally about writing. Sometimes he would even provide a writing topic which the rest of the group would adopt and then he would fail to write, e.g. September 20 Justin provides the topic "Lollyland" and helps to elaborate on Sharon's story. When he is asked what he is going to write about he says he doesn't know yet.

Often he doesn't do any writing. He knows, too, that he isn't performing as others have done.

August 23 excerpt.

J: *I've got hardly anything in my story folder.*

While others start to write and question one another about how a word is spelled, Justin tries to organize colours for his drawing, and comments on others' drawings.

J: *There's all dirt underneath the grass.*

S: *Errrr!*

J: *Grass always has dirt underneath it, doesn't it?*

Offers his colouring implements:

J: *Anybody want to use a crayon?*

and speaks repetitively, as though invoking writing to commence:

J: *Story story story story story story story I'm writing all my story, all my writing there.*

Often expectations far outweigh actualities:

J: I wanna story about this big.

S: You can't make it that big 'cos the paper's not that big. You can't make the paper that big.

J: Yes.

By the end of the lesson Justin's writing hasn't progressed very far:

J: Kelley can I have your dark green?

T: I want you to write your story.

J: Oh I don't want to write my story.

T: When I come back I'll see your story - OK?

J: How do you do a "the"? How do you do a "the"?

S: "T" "H" "E".

R: I don't know what to write about.

J: "T" "H" How do you write "H"?

The transcript of writing time for September 27 points out one of Justin's major problems. At this stage he realizes that writing down one's story involves knowing enough symbols to represent the sounds he hears. However, Justin doesn't always know the symbols, or often won't take a chance at guessing them. This slows him down as he has to wait and ask for a spelling and often he is distracted. As Chomsky (1979) states, "If children have sufficient metalinguistic awareness to permit the segmentation of words into phonemic components, and a knowledge of letter names or sounds, they can go ahead" (p.47). Justin's problem at this stage is that he hasn't acquired the knowledge of letter names or sounds, and "going ahead" is too difficult a task.

September 27 excerpt:

Justin: like

Teacher: thing

J: Is it a "C". I mean ... is it a big "C" or a little "c"?

T: *and ... and*

J: *"d"? "t"?*

T: *nd ... nd*

J: *"n"?*

T: *and "d" that's a "d"*

J: *"d"*

Rebecca: *Want me to do a "D"?*

T: *No, Justin'll do a "d". You get on with your story ... and*

J: *"d" "d" um the little "d" or the big "D" 'cos I don't know how to do the little "d". I only know how to do the big one.*

T: *Little "d". Can you see the "d" on "dog"? See the "d" on "dog"?*

J: *Where?*

T: *Over there.*

J: *I'll just go an' have a look.*

By October, Justin has started to understand the process. He must still completely draw a picture before he writes.

October 18 excerpt.

T: *... Justin what's your story going to be about? I know it's going to be about Color world isn't it? When are you going to start writing?*

J: *Um I just have to add some some a little person up there (pointing to a space in his picture).*

T: *Why do you need a little person up there?*

J: *Because um he's floating.*

T: *I beg your pardon?*

J: *He's a he's a balloon.*

However, once he starts to write, even though he is often dependent on the teacher, and other children for spellings, he manages to complete a story.

The balloon and Colour world
I went to the beach and I bought a balloon it slipped out of my hand
It busted I didn't have a balloon I cried it doesn't matter

By December, Justin has started to write at the beginning of the lesson. The picture is not a means for postponing the task of writing. Its importance has diminished. Justin writes before he draws.

T: You going to write some more Justin?
Can you read your story to me?

J: I went to ...

T: Point to the words as you go.

J: I went to the the zoo.
I saw the monkey It was climbing on the bars I saw ...

T: What's that word there? "l" ...

J: "saw"

T: No. "l" I liked.

J: It um I liked it. It was was funny because he was "P" ... he It was funny He was eating a ban a banana The end.

T: Are you going to write another story or are you going to draw a picture?

J: I ...

T: How come you didn't draw a picture first?

J: Because um I like to do the words first.

Insert Figure 5

Chomsky (1979) also goes on to make the point that "an additional factor in the greater accessibility of writing is that in writing, the words and message are known, whereas in reading the words are not known ahead of time and must be identified". (p.47). One aspect of Justin's and the other children's reading of their own stories, whose meaning was known ahead of time, was the continued use of anaphoric reference; re-reading the sentence or phrase before a stop or a miscue, so as not to lose the thread of meaning. Thus reading of one's writing may develop a skill found in efficient readers, right from the start.

I went to the zoo and I saw
a big kitty. It was tomorrow
but I got to see it. It was
cute. I thought it was
a baby kitty.

9 DEC 82

Figure 5

Text characteristics which show young writers are developing

In earlier writing and reading studies (Applebee, 1978; Poulsen et al, 1977; King and Rentel, 1981), researchers noted children's increasing understanding and use of text characteristics such as 'Once upon a time' and cohesive devices such as exophoric reference and conjunction.

Text characteristics can be more broadly defined. At any particular time, each child has a specific notion of what writing is. Text characteristics, then, are taken to mean those aspects of text which writers actively use as they write and as they read.

Drawing and writing

For example, several alternative hypotheses are inferred by the children about drawing and writing during the year:

* drawing guides composing and precedes it.

Excerpt August, 1982

T: Why did you write a long story there and a short story there?

Sharon: Because I did um a more picture a...a...bigger picture than that one 'cos that's only a small picture and that's a big one.

T: Right. If you do a small picture you do a big story do you?

S: And if I do a small picture I do a small story.

* drawing happens before writing but isn't always linked with it.

Excerpt October 18, 1982

T: Justin, what's your story about? What a big picture! What's your story going to be about?

Justin: Um .. colourworld.

T: Sorry?

J: Colourworld.

T: Colourworld. Tell me about it.

J: Dogs are blue and have black ears, some trees have brown and then the leaves are red.

T: Boy oh boy pink stars!

The balloon and Colourworld
I went to the beach and I boughta balloon it slipped out of my hand
It busted I didn't have a balloon I cried it doesn't matter

* as stories become more prominent, drawing recedes in importance. Stories lose their dependence on pictures and use is made of endophoric, rather than exophoric reference.

Excerpt - Sharon, 14th March, 1983

T: Mm. Before when I used to come and look at your writing you used to do a picture for every page. Why don't you do a picture on every page now?

S: Oh because I don't feel like it - because otherwise um you waste um some of the pages with all the pictures.

Spelling

Students also develop alternative ways for spelling words in their stories. Mostly, all four children would say "Ya sound it out". However, Sharon has a repertoire of words which she knows that she knows. Rebecca, on the other hand, has a repertoire of places where she knows she can find the spellings of words. Such places include: labels around the room; published versions of her own and other children's stories, and trade books around the room.

All of the children know that they can ask someone in the group.

Length of text

Other characteristics of text which influence children's writing include those aspects which have been valued within the group. By December, length is seen as a valuable text characteristic. Kelley writes an eleven page story and the group has a discussion about lengthy stories. This influences Sharon to go and get eleven pieces of paper, and then to write 'The End' on the eleventh page. By March, 1983, length is still an important aspect of writing.

Excerpt 14th March, 1983

Teacher: Are you pleased with this story?

Sharon: Yes

T: What?

S: Ah, I'm gunna get it published when I finish it.

T: How do you know?

S: Because Mrs Platt asked me.

T: Right. When do you decide you're going to have something published?

S: Um, if you write a long story like I think um that I might write a long story so I can get it published.

Theoretical Considerations

What does this tell us about how children learn to write and to read?

Children do change and there are aspects of change which are common to all four kindergarteners.

* Drawing precedes writing and is an aid to it
* Earlier stories are dependent on drawing for meaning
* Specific story formats are used repeatedly and help to develop fluency (writing to a formula which has worked before)
* Use of past tense develops as more story categories are included
* As spelling ceases to be a barrier to writing, and thoughts flow freely onto paper, drawing decreases in importance
* Use of revision develops with a sense of the author's role
* Earlier direct copying of labels and stories gives way to inclusion of trade book characters in stories, and recounting of previously read stories in one's own words
* Story size may depend on the number of pages available to make a book before writing begins, or on what the group sees as an acceptable length.

Implications for Classroom Practice

. Being a sensitive observer of what children can do: knowing what to know and knowing what to look for.

As teachers we need to know what to look for as children read and write. Learning is a matter of constantly refining and modifying one's ideas, in this case, about how reading and writing work. Teachers need to become sensitive observers of critical changes in children's reading and writing and to note those aspects of text which children use, and which may need to be consolidated. For example, the observation that Rebecca always used full stops to separate words, and almost always began every word with a capital letter was an opportune time to discuss space formats and capitalisation. Clay (1979) makes the point that:

> "If teachers under any instruction program are sensitive observers of the children's progress, then they are in a position to notice more and more of the behaviors that confirm a valid theory, and/or they are able to reject notions that do not fit with their careful observations. At the same time, their questions and their creative solutions will be subjected to feedback from the continued monitoring." (p.169)

. Providing time: lots of it

As teachers we also need to give young writers and readers time to discuss, to listen and to write; as well as time to read a wide range of books. Sharon, in an early transcript, mentioned the importance of copying out stories from her books at home, while all four children frequently used copying of labels, posters and "Mr Men" stories as means for developing fluency.

. Providing demonstrations of writing and reading in classrooms

If we were to evaluate our reading/writing programs we would find that many of them are still ultimately word based. What we are doing by providing such programs is demonstrating to children that word knowledge, correct spelling and pronunciation of every word, right from the beginning, are of utmost importance. Children may become lost for words : they can't see the forest of text-reading and text-writing for the trees of words and word-based activities which occupy their time in schools. If we want to show that text characteristics are important, then right from the beginning, their presence needs to be felt. Marie Clay (1979a) and Donald Graves (1982) both say, when discussing reading and writing programs respectively, that children learn from what we do. What it is that the teacher emphasizes in class, is central to the child's concept of what's important. DeFord's (1982) research is adequate evidence to support such ideas.

In addition, classrooms should physically demonstrate what reading and writing are and what they are used for. They should provide labels, alphabet charts, sentences, rhymes and stories which children can read, listen to and copy down.

. Being aware of individual strategies

Each of the children in this study adopted personal strategies for coping with classroom requirements. Sharon needed to underline her words so she could read them back later. Rebecca needed to know where she could find words conventionally spelled. Kelley adopted the writing task for several months to what seemed like copious repetition, from an adult viewpoint, for the purpose of developing fluency, using a strategy which Peter Elbow (1973) recommended for writers when they don't know what to write. Justin's writing was sparse and much time was spent in unrelated talk and drawing until he finally learned what the writing task entailed. Then, the 'drawing before writing' principle was reversed.

A central idea in cognitive psychology is that comprehension is a constructive process. Children construct meaning about classroom tasks based on prior experience. Doyle (1979) states:

> "For some students, the problems of learning from classrooms may originate in their understanding of the classroom system. The more that is known about how children understand classrooms the greater the possibility of helping students to be more effective learners". (Ch 5)

Postscript

These four kindergarten children are still writing: on March 14, 1983, I talked to the children about their writing once again. Sharon's March story, 'School', demonstrated the embryonic ethnographer. I'll let her tell you how life continues:

> I like school. It is fun. I like my teacher. Her name is Mrs Platt. I like her very much. Our class is very busy indeed. We have a library in the corner. It has lot of books in it. I like the classroom very much. It has lots of toys in it. The room is full of things on the wall. There are lots of sounds in the room. There are two bean bags and six cushions and things about summer. The bean bags and cushions are in the corner. I like the big bean bag. It has lots of dried beans in it. It is squishy-squashy. That is why I like it. I am in one

stroke two 'P'. Our classroom has ceiling fans and a frieze on the wall. It is fun when I draw on the chalkboard and I play I and I play with Charmaine sometimes. I like playing chasings and playing hopscotch and we have merit badges every Monday. Our class is called a composite class. On the first of March we had twenty-nine children in our class and there is a chalkboard out the front for Mrs Platt. And there is a doll's house in the corner. We do story writing. We do lots of things on the little chalkboards and then we copy it on computer paper. It is fun at school and we get stories published. Mrs Platt is reading the 'BFG' and I am reading Paddington Takes the Test.

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